

412
LETTERS

OF

Samuel Holden, Esquire, *K*

TO

Dr. BENJAMIN COLEMAN

OF

BOSTON, NEW-ENGLAND.



L O N D O N :

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Letter

LETTERS

OF

General Andrew B. Smith

TO

Mr. Benjamin Franklin



Boston, New-England.

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LETTERS

OF

Samuel Holden, Esq; &c.

1718.

—**W**E ought certainly, with the greatest Thankfulness, to enjoy the Blessings which a bountiful God bestows, and contentedly wait our Dismission: But still, Earth is not Heaven, but a kind of Banishment from our Father's House. How can we believe and love, and not long to possess and enjoy! He lives long who lives well. Usefulness, and not Hours, should measure our Duration.

—It is no small Comfort to reflect upon our daily drawing near to a better Life. May our heavenly Father give us an undelayed Meeting there! For tho' the longest Life is comparatively but for a Moment, yet the Minutes of Absence from so dear

and glorious a Being, may, in Christian Arithmetick, well be accounted Ages.

—It were very desirable, by the Will of God, to maintain Vigour of Mind, and Health of Body, for Usefulness in Life, and the Comfort of it. But tho' a gradual Decay takes us off from the Relish of Life, yet it yields us this Consolation, that shortly our Spirits will ascend with Ardors of Love to the Regions of Holiness, and will there receive a divine Nature, as our Bodies will a divine Form, and so we shall resemble the Son of God both in Soul and Body.

—It has long since been my settled Opinion, that the most exalted State in this Life, without Respect to Eternity, is not worth a Thought or Wish. We have Desires of Good greater than all worldly Things can satisfy, and Capacities for Good larger than they can fill: So that we are still destitute and craving, how large soever our Portion be, and how free soever our Indulgence is to sensitive Enjoyments. This Conviction we have from within ourselves, that we are made for something more excellent. A Truth as certain, as that Wisdom and Goodness had any Thing to do in our Composition.

—God

—God make me useful in Life till he is pleased to call me hence. I think no Circumstance in Life here can make it a tolerable State of Being, save as we are, and act under the Prospect of a perfect one to come on shortly.

Without God all Things are Emptiness and Vexation, and it must be so till we come to have an uninterrupted Employment of all our Faculties upon him, in perpetual Imitations of him, and an exact Resemblance of him in his moral Perfections. Under the Views of this I think Death a great Privilege, not a Punishment. Spirit no more than Matter can be at rest till in its Centre.

—Pray for me, that as long as God sees fit to continue me here, I may be a faithful and happy Servant, and at last give up my Account with Joy. Life is now drawing to a Close, and I think it a great Mercy, since our Days are evil, they are so few! That we are not longer kept in this low State of Being, where our Knowledge of God is so imperfect, our Capacities for him so narrow and limited, our Acquaintance with him so broken and interrupted, and our Indisposition for it so great, altho' he is the Original of our Being, and the Object of our Happiness.—Shall animal Nature first after suitable Refreshment, and shall

not rational Nature pant after its spiritual Perfection? All I have to desire in Life, unworthy of any thing at all, is to fill up the Remainder in Thankfulness to God, Usefulness to Man, and a growing Meetness for the heavenly World.—I am sometimes apt to regret, that Age and Experience, which qualify the Mind for greater Usefulness, should unfit the Body; but so it has pleased the all-wise and good God to circumstance us in this World.—I bless God, that for the little Time I have to live (and, if he sees fit, he may shorten the evil Days) I have no Views in Life but to honour him, by improving all the Advantages I have for promoting his Interest, and the Good of my Fellow Creatures.—And tho' the Multiplicity of my Affairs deny me the Honour done me of your Court of accepting the Name of their Agent (very sensible I am of this Mark of their Esteem and Confidence) yet they shall not of the Thing, by doing your Country all the good Offices in my Power.—

To a Gentleman in Boston upon the same Occasion.

—THE various Affairs I am engaged in, besides my private Concerns make it impossible for me to go through
tha

that Trust in the Manner I ought: But I do assure you, and the rest of the Gentlemen (as I wrote Mr. Willard, I will do them all the Services in my Power; and I do really think I may say, will have more Weight, and be better attended to without, than under the Character of Agent,

I have on divers Occasions, where I found Impressions made to the Disadvantage of your Country, endeavoured to wipe them off, and set Things in a true Light, and I shall continue on all proper Occasions, what in me lies, to promote your Interest and Welfare with great Pleasure and Satisfaction; for I know no greater Pleasure in Life, nor other End worth living for, than doing all the (little) Good we can.

London, September

13. 1735.

At the same Time be added; My Daughters thank you for the Memoirs of Mrs. Turell's Life; an Example worthy Imitation, a Loss very afflicting. Yet, was not Self-love too predominant, and our Faith of invisable Realities too weak, we should rejoyce at a pious Relative's Admission into the Society of the Blessed. We congratulate upon any petty Advantages gained in this low State of Being; and again we

mourn their Advancement to the highest Degrees of Honour and Felicity, because out of our Ken! Such aukward and preposterous Creatures are we.—

I here remit you two hundred Pounds Sterling *, which I desire you to dispose of in such a Manner as may be most for the Honour of God, in promoting the Knowledge and Practice of Religion, or in the Relief of the necessitous Members of our Saviour.

1736.

I Thank you for Mrs. *Gerristi's* Letter, a most acceptable Present! to see the Serenity and Calmness of Mind she possesses in the midst of Pain, &c. which must be the Effect of a Will wholly devoted, and intirely resigned to God; the happiest State on Earth, as being nearest to that of Heaven.

At the same Time I must lament myself, that I find it hard sometimes to bear up against the little common Inconveniencies which unavoidably attend our present State, amidst all the Peace, Plenty, and every agreeable

* The whole of my Receipts from this excellent Person in Books and Bills of Exchange, amounts to no less than 4847 l. New-England Currency.

greeable Circumstance, which a good God has favoured so unworthy a Creature with.

The Use I would make of it is this, the more to endear himself and my Duty to me, the more earnestly to long after, and to prepare for the heavenly World, the Praises of which I would fain anticipate here by a similar Temper.—Yet I am so conscious of my many Sins and Imperfections, that the utmost I durst ask my Maker, were it not for the Christian Revelations, would be only this,—That I might not be eternally miserable, nor lose that Existence I have made no better Use of.

I had almost said I am sorry to hear of Mrs. *Gerristi's* Death; but I recal myself; I must rejoyce that God has been pleased to take to himself, from this painful and miserable Life, one so ripe for Heaven.

I had but one Son, and it pleased God early to take him from me. My Comfort in the Loss of him and my dear Mother was, that I had in each one Attachment less to Earth, one Argument more for Heaven. I bless God I have just Reason to hope my Children fear him, having long since given up themselves to him. I thank God, neither I nor they are for hazarding

zarding the future for any present Advantages of Life. I hope my Treasure is in Heaven, and would to God my Heart were more there. Abstract from God and Futurity, I would not accept of an Eternity here upon any given Circumstances whatsoever.—We are made for God, and without him the whole Creation were nothing, less than nothing and Vanity.—And yet this empty impertinent World is continually breaking in upon my Mind, and disturbing my Communion with a better. But why give I the World such hard Names, which is in itself good, when alas! it is my own vainer Heart, Self-will and Self-love that is the Occasion of all, and will be so till I come to loose myself in God, (if I may so speak) and Self-love be swallowed up in his.

1738.

MAY I live only to do the Will of God, and finish the Work he has given me to do, and then welcome Death, welcome Eternity, which I hope will consign me to my Saviour's Bosom, where is Fulness of Joy for ever.

It

It has pleased God, and his Will be done, to continue our Child under sore Pains and Disorder, till she is brought to the very Brink of the Grave, and we are daily expecting her Departure. Was Nature to speak, it would say I have had a very uncomfortable Summer, but Grace must own it has been filled with Mercy and Blessing. Did infinite Wisdom see it necessary to make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through Suffering, who knew no Sin, and shall we, sinful Creatures, pretend to an Exemption? Our Corruptions make these Incisions necessary, and perhaps the more painful still the more necessary: Were we detached from the Creature, delivered from inordinate Self-love, crucified from the World; and did we make God our Centre, how easy would Submission be? May he be pleased to work us up to this happy Disposition, that we may never will any Thing but what he would have us to will by the Rules of his Gospel, and the Course of his Providence.

We are here as Patients sent into an Hospital for our Recovery, and when the Cure is perfected on our Minds, and the Work of Grace in our Hearts, we shall get to Rest in our Father's House; and I doubt not but as soon as this Frame is broke, this Knot untied,

untied, we shall meet in God the Felicity of immortal Spirits. What a Chasm would the Sleep of the Soul till the Morning of the Resurrection make in our Existence? And tho' it be said we shall not be sensible of it, it were never the less real. However fashionable this Doctrine may grow, yet it is uncomfortable, unscriptural, and unphilosophical. It may as well be for any indeterminate Number of Ages, if at all; and it were really so much Loss of Being to us.—And will the Father of our Spirits (to speak after the Manner of Men) when he has been at so much Cost and Trouble to bring us to love and delight in him, throw us into a kind of Non-entity? Can he want Entertainment for an unimbodied Mind? Or can that want a Capacity for him, when yet, under all the present Disadvantages of this vile Body, it can lisp out that it loves him, and tell him that it is weary of this State of Distance and Absence from him; where it knows so little, and loves no more, and longs therefore to be dissolved? And has God himself wrought us up to this self-same Thing, and will he disappoint us when the Spirit is leaving the Body, big with Hopes of seeing, loving, and enjoying him for ever?

Well,

Well, I am fully convinced, that the most desirable and happy State in this Life is, that Christian Perfection, which consists in the Union of our Souls with God, and in a close and intimate Communion with him; that no Friends on Earth converse more frequently, more freely, grow more tenderly together. And hereby we acquire a Greatness of Soul, which raises us above all Events of Life, frees us from all undue Regards to Men, gives us Courage and Strength for a becoming Discharge of Duty, on all Occasions to acquit ourselves well; inspires us with a Courage truly Christian in all we undertake, and gives us a continual Victory over ourselves and Passions. And could we but once divest ourselves, and make God all in all to us, what Pleasure and Transport should we not feel in it? Methinks these Truths, which, when considered, force the Assent of the Mind, would draw the Will after them, and fix the Attention and Affection on the all-desirable Object.

How

Well,

1739.

How happy would it be for us, if we could act as we reason, and as readily bring our Wills into an intire Resignation to the divine, as we are convinced it is our Wisdom, Interest and Duty to do! Nay, when we know the Will of God must, and shall take Place, whether we will or not! And that God, by leaving our Wills, has in a Manner put it into our Power to make a Virtue of Necessity, in a complacential Acquiescence in his Dispositions of us: For God seems to have left us Wills, not that we should keep them, but that we should have something to offer to him, sacrificing ours to his. This would give us the transporting Pleasure of seeing ourselves co-operating with God in all his grand Designs worthy of himself, respecting us and others. But alas! this Self-idea keeps its Hold, and would have all referred to it.

My dear Child is gone to rest, and, hope, we shall soon meet in Happiness. Had she lived according to the Course of Nature, our Separation would have been much longer. She is, I trust, safely landed

ed in the heavenly *Canaan*. I am still upon the Sea, but I hope not far from Port. Hours, Days and Years press on as the Waves, and shortly we shall be out of sight. May our Motion be swifter the nearer we approach the Centre of our Happiness, our Desires more ardent, our Preparations greater, that so an Entrance may be administered to us more abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom.—How happy were it for us, if Things affected us suitable to their Nature and Importance; if God and heavenly Things had but the Influence to draw us off from Earth, as earthly Things have to draw us down to them!



F I N I S.

A few LINES of Mrs. TURELL's
wrote when a Child of eleven Years
of Age : With her Father Dr. COL-
MAN'S Answer; taken from her
printed Life and Diary, a Book worth
its Weight in Gold.

I Fear the great Eternal One above,
The God of Grace, the God of Love :
He to whom Seraphims Hallelujah's sing,
And Angels do their Songs and Praises bring,
Happy the Soul that does in Heaven rest,
Where with his Saviour he is ever blest;
With heavenly Joys and Rapture is possest,
No Thoughts but of his God inspire his Breast.
Happy are they that walk in Wisdom's Ways,
That tread her Paths, and shine in all her Rays.

Her Father's ANSWER.

JOY of my Life ! is this thy lovely Voice ?
Sing on, and a fond Father's Heart rejoice.
'Twas nobly dar'd, my charming Child ! a Song
From a Babe's Mouth of right to Heaven belong.
Pleasant thy Wit, but more the sacred Theme,
Such as thy Name and all my Cares beseeem.
Already you repay the Pains I took
To form you for your Maker and your Book.
Sing on, my Bird ! and let thy early Days
Be sacred to thy God and to his Praise :
Thy Infant Wit devote to Things divine,
And like some beauteous Infant Angel shine.